

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

The first President of the Polish Republic was General **WOJCIECH JARUZELSKI**, who assumed office in July 1989. He “won” the position but by a bare one vote majority of a joint session of the deputies to the two houses of Poland’s parliament, the 460 member *Sejm* and the 100 member Senate. These deputies had been chosen in the incredible election of June 4, 1989. Jaruzelski took office as part of the historic Roundtable agreement made earlier that Spring by the ruling Polish United Workers (Communist) Party and the Solidarity opposition. A true irrelevancy from the start, Jaruzelski resigned in Fall 1990 to make possible the first ever popular election of a president of Poland – in November 1990. Since then, Polish presidential elections have been held every five years. To be nominated, candidates must get at least 100,000 signatures to be placed on the ballot. The election procedure is like that in France. All certified candidates run in the first round but only the top two vote getters compete in the second round two weeks later – unless one candidate is elected with an absolute majority of votes in Round One. In Poland the prime minister is the more significant policy maker. But as a nationally elected official and as head of state, the president is certainly not a figurehead.

1990 Election: November 26 (60.6 pct. turnout); December 9 (53.4 pct. turnout)

Round One: LECH WALESZA (Solidarity) 40 pct.; Stanislaw Tyminski 23.1 pct.; Tadeusz Mazowiecki 18.1 pct.; Wlodzimierz Cimoszewicz (Post Communist Left Democratic Alliance – SLD) 9.2 pct.; Roman Bartoszcz (Polish People’s Party - PSL) 7.2 pct.; Leszek Moczulski (Confederation of Independent Poland) 2.5 pct.

Round Two: WALESZA 74.3 pct. ELECTED. Tyminski 25.7 pct. One strange election.

Summary. Poland’s first ever popular vote to select a president was expected to be a contest between the leaders of the two main factions of the divided Solidarity movement, Union leader Lech Walesa and Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki. The charismatic, 47 year old Walesa, angered at being “shelved” after 1989, was seen as the representative of the populist side of Solidarity and at a time when the country was going through the extraordinarily painful

economic transformation that was being directed by Mazowiecki. However, Mazowiecki failed as a campaigner and a new-comer, Stan Tyminski, "The Man from Nowhere," did well enough to deprive an overconfident Walesa of a first round win. In the second round a chastened Walesa won and in a landslide.

1995 Election November 5 (64.7 pct. turnout); November 19 (68.2 pct. turnout)

Round One: ALEKSANDER KWASNIEWSKI (SLD) 35.1 pct.; Walesa 33.1 pct.; Jacek Kuron (Freedom Union party) 9.2 pct.; Jan Olszewski (Movement for the Republic) 6.9 pct.; Waldemar Pawlak (PSL) 4.2 pct. Seven others got the rest.

Round Two: KWASNIEWSKI 51.7 pct. ELECTED. Walesa 48.3 pct.

Summary, 1995. In early 1995 Walesa's controversial actions and behavior and actions in the unsettled economic and political conditions of the time made him a seeming "dead duck". However he gradually pulled together much of the now deeply factionalized Solidarity movement - only to lose to Kwasniewski in a very close race. The youthful, polished Kwasniewski, a leader from the old and discredited PUWP, promised Poles a better future, respect for democracy, and a far less contentious presidency.

2000 Election October 8 (61.1 pct. turnout)

Round One ONLY: ALEKSANDER KWASNIEWSKI 53.9 pct. ELECTED. Andrzej Olechowski 17.3 pct.; Marian Krzaklewski (Solidarity Electoral Action party) 15.6 pct.; nine others got the rest, including Walesa who received just 1 percent of the vote.

Summary, 2000. Kwasniewski's first term was a success. He proved able to work constructively with the Parliament, stayed clear of controversy, and strongly backed Poland's entry into NATO. His opponents never figured out how to unite and he won easily in the first round.

2005 Election October 9 (49.6 pct. turnout) October 23 (51 pct. turnout)

Round One: Donald Tusk (Civic Platform Party) 36.3 pct.; Lech Kaczynski (Law and Justice Party) 33.1 pct.; Andrzej Lepper (Peasants' Self Defense) 15.1 pct.; Marek Borowski (Social Democratic party) 10.3 pct. Eight others won the rest of the votes. SLD nominee Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz dropped out before the vote.

Round Two: LECH KACZYNSKI 54 pct., ELECTED. Tusk 46 pct.

Summary. This election was the first in which no SLD candidate played a part, due to its nominee's withdrawal. The contest instead pitted the nominees of the two main factions of the old Solidarity movement, Lech Kaczynski of Law and Justice versus Donald Tusk of the Civic Platform.

2010 Election June 30 (55.9 pct. turnout) July 4 (54.4 pct. turnout)

This election came a few months earlier than scheduled after a catastrophic airplane crash in Russia in April where Lech Kaczynski and 95 others were killed.

Round One: BRONISLAW KOMOROWSKI (Civic Platform) 41.5 pct.; Jarosław Kaczynski, Lech's twin brother, 36.5 pct.; Grzegorz Napieralski (SLD) 13.7 pct. Seven others received the rest of the votes.

Round Two: KOMOROWSKI 53 pct., ELECTED. Jarosław Kaczynski 47 pct.

Summary. Kaczynski's death led to his twin brother, Jarosław, replacing him as the Law and Justice party's candidate. In the election, Komorowski, the previously chosen candidate of Civic Platform won narrowly. From 2010 to 2015 the Civic Platform found itself in charge of the *Sejm* (with Donald Tusk as Prime Minister), the Senate, and the presidency.

2015 Election May 10 (49.0 pct. turnout) May 24 (55.0 pct. turnout)

Komorowski at first looked like a solid winner but ran a lackluster campaign. Law and Justice's nominee, Andrzej Duda, young and unknown, campaigned hard. One time entertainer Pawel Kukiz did well as an anti-establishment candidate. Komorowski's loss was a warning for his party in that Fall's parliament election.

Round One: ANDRZEJ DUDA 34.8 pct., Bronislaw Komorowski 33.8 pct., Pawel Kukiz 20.8 pct., eight others received the rest of the vote.

Round Two: DUDA 51.6 pct., ELECTED. Komorowski 48.5 pct.

Summary. Komorowski's defeat was somewhat surprising. He had performed his duties well as president and was opposed by an obscure opponent. But the times had changed. Tusk was gone to Brussels. Scandalous private conversations of government leaders were aired. And Komorowski ran a listless campaign against an energized Law and Justice party and a spirited Duda.

Soon after, Law AND Justice won an absolute majority of seats in the SEJM and Senate, giving it near total control over the government.

2020 Election June 28 (64.1 percent turnout) July 12 (68.1 percent turnout)

Held in a tumultuous, unnerving time, President ANDRZEJ DUDA won narrowly over his run-off rival, Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski. The election was first set for May 10 and 24. But this schedule was derailed due to fears connected with the pandemic virus.

Indeed, Duda's main opponent, the Civic Platform's Malgorzata Kidawa-Blonska, dropped out of the campaign in May and was replaced by Trzaskowski, due in great part to controversial issues involving the holding of the election. The campaign was bitterly fought and just before the first round President Duda flew to Washington, DC to meet with U.S. President Donald Trump. His move was aimed at enhancing his election chances. His campaign was further helped by the Law and Justice government's effective handling of the pandemic, its legislative record in passing social programs to improve the economic conditions of working families and retirees, and its popular foreign affairs policies. The opposition argued, based on the long controversy over the judiciary, that continued Law and Justice party rule represented a threat to democracy and even Poland's ties with the European Union.

Round One: Duda won 43.7 percent of the vote, Trzaskowski 30.3 percent, independent Szymon Holownia (13.9 percent), with 8 others getting the rest.

Round Two: DUDA 51.1 pct. ELECTED. Trzaskowski 48.9 pct.

ELECTIONS TO THE POLISH *SEJM* AND SENATE

Beginning on June 4, 1989 Poland's citizens have voted in ten elections to the country's two house parliament, the 460 member national assembly or *SEJM* (pronounced "same") and the 100 member Senate. The Senate (in Polish *Senat*) was established in Spring 1989 in an extra-constitutional manner in the Roundtable negotiations between leaders of the Polish People's Republic government and Solidarity. Prior to 1989, during the era of communist party rule (1945-1989) Poland operated with only one legislative body, the *Sejm*. And in that time the *Sejm* 'rubber stamped' the dictates of the ruling United Workers (communist) Party. Things have been very different beginning in 1989.

***On Elections:* The largely advisory Senate is elected at the same time as that to the far more significant 460 member *Sejm*. Senators are elected - in the 'first past the post' manner followed in the U.S. Congress and Britain's House of Commons. *Sejm* deputies are elected by proportional representation.**

(Senate election results have mirrored those in the *Sejm* and for the most part have not been significant in determining public policy. However in 2019, the opposition parties made a successful pact to defeat Law and Justice candidates in the senate districts. The result was a 51-49 victory for the united opposition.)

***Terms of office:* The parliament is elected to serve for four years. However, on three occasions (1991, 1993, 2007) elections were called earlier. After the *Sejm* election the leader of the majority party (or party coalition) becomes prime minister and in effect becomes the chief decision maker in the political system.**

June 4 1989 *Sejm* Election. This vote was unique in how it was run and epic in its results. Only 161 of the 460 seats in the *Sejm* were contested with 299 reserved to the United Workers Party and two submissive “allies” – the Peasant and Democratic parties. In the vote, Solidarity’s Citizens’ Committee won all 161 contested seats. And amazingly, though running unopposed, many regime candidates lost when they failed to win a majority of the votes that were cast. In the Senate, Citizens Committee candidates won 99 of 100 seats - one went to an independent. The election, really a referendum on the regime (which got just 25 percent of the votes), led to the collapse of the existing three party ruling arrangement and the creation of a Solidarity-led coalition. Backed by 76 Peasant Party and 27 Democratic Party deputies, TADEUSZ MAZOWIECKI became Prime Minister. In December 1989 the *Sejm* ended the People’s Republic and created the Third Republic of Poland. In January 1990, the United Workers Party dissolved. Many of its younger leaders formed a new, “social democratic” party, that evolved into the Alliance of the Democratic Left (*SLD*). Turnout – 62.9 pct.

October 27 1991 *Sejm* Election. 43.2 percent turnout. 111 parties compete and 29 parties gain seats thanks to receiving at least 1 percent of the vote. Major “winners” – Democratic Union* (62 seats, 12.3 pct. of the vote); *SLD* (60 seats, 12.0 pct.); Catholic Electoral Action* (49 seats, 8.7 pct.); Center Alliance* (44 seats, 8.7 pct.); Polish Peasant Party or *PSL* (48 seats, 8.7 pct.); Confederation of Independent Poland (46 seats, 7.5 pct.); Liberal Democratic Alliance* (37 seats, 7.5 pct.); Peasant Alliance* (28 seats, 5.5 pct.); Solidarity Union* (27 seats, 5.1 pct.); 19 other parties, 59 seats, 24 pct. of the vote, including a “Beer Lovers” party with 16 deputies. A weak coalition led by JAN OLSZEWSKI is finally put together and composed of the Catholic, Center Alliance, Peasant Alliance and Solidarity Union parties and backed by the *PSL*. It lasts only six months and is followed by a coalition headed by HANNA SUCHOCKA after Waldemar Pawlak of the *PSL* fails to win sufficient support to govern. (* = major parties connected with the Solidarity movement).

September 28, 1993 *Sejm* Election. 52.1 percent turnout. In this election the law is changed so a party needs to win at least 5 percent and a Party "bloc" 8 percent of the votes to gain entry into the *Sejm*. This is the rule to this day. Results: *SLD* (171 seats, 20.4 pct. of the vote); *PSL* (132 seats, 15.4 pct.); Democratic Union* (74 seats, 10.4 pct.); Union of Labor (41 seats, 7.3 pct.); Catholic Bloc* (6.4 pct., no seats); Confederation of Independent Poland (22 seats, 5.8 pct.); Walesa *BBWR* party* (16 seats, 5.4 pct.) Several Solidarity parties win nearly 30 percent of the vote but fail to gain a single seat. Prime Ministers in the *SLD-PSL* coalition - the *PSL*'s WALDEMAR PAWLAK, JOZEF OLEKSY, and WLODZIMIERZ CIMOSZEWICZ (both from the *SLD*).

September 21, 1997 *Sejm* Election. 46.9 percent turnout. Solidarity Electoral Action* (*AWS*, 201 seats, 33.8 pct. of the vote); *SLD* (164 seats, 16.4 pct.); Freedom Union* (60, 13.4 pct.); *PSL* (27 seats, 7.3 pct.); Movement for Poland* (6 seats, 5.6 pct.), other parties 24 pct. and 2 seats to German minority. JERZY BUZEK of *AWS* becomes Prime Minister in a *AWS-Freedom Union* coalition.

September 23, 2001 *Sejm* Election. 46.3 percent turnout. *SLD* (216 seats, 41.0 pct. of the vote); Civic Platform* (65 seats, 12.7 pct.); Peasants' Self Defense (53 seats, 10.2 pct.); Law and Justice Party* (44 seats, 9.5 pct.); *PSL* (42 seats, 9.0 pct.); League of Polish Families* (38 seats, 7.9 pct.); *AWS* Bloc* 5.6 pct. No seats). *AWS* breaks up into several factions. JERZY MILLER (*SLD*) becomes Prime Minister in a *SLD-PSL* coalition that later collapses in the face of scandal.

September 2005 *Sejm* Election. 40.6 percent turnout. Law and Justice (155 seats, 27.0% of the vote); Civic Platform (133 seats, 24.1 percent); Peasants' Self Defense (56, 11.4 percent); *SLD* (55, 11.3 percent); League of Families (34 seats, 8.0 percent); *PSL* (25 seats, 7.0 percent), Social Democrats (no seats, 3.9 percent). 22 parties competed. Law and Justice forms an unstable coalition with Peasants' Self Defense and the League of Families. JAROSLAW KACZYNSKI of Law and Justice eventually becomes prime minister.

October 21, 2007 *Sejm* Election. 53.9 percent turnout. Civic Platform (209 seats, 41.5 percent of the vote); Law and Justice (166 seats, 32.1 percent); *PSL* (31 seats, 8.9 percent); Left and Democrats (55 seats, 11.3 percent); Self Defense and League of Families no seats, 1.5 percent and 1.3 percent of the vote, respectively. DONALD TUSK (Civic Platform) forms a coalition with the *PSL*.

October 9, 2011 *Sejm* Election. 48.9 percent turnout. Civic Platform 207 seats, 39.2 percent of the vote); Law and Justice (157 seats, 29.9 percent); Palikot Movement (10.0 percent, 40 seats); *PSL* (28 seats, 8.4 percent); *SLD* (27 seats, 8.2 percent). TUSK continues as prime minister in a coalition with *PSL*.

October 25, 2015 *Sejm* Election. 50.9 percent turnout. Law and Justice (235 seats, 37.6 percent of the vote); Civic Platform (138 seats, 24.1 percent); Kukiz 15 Movement (42 seats, 8.8 percent); Modern Party (28 seats, 7.6 percent); United Left Bloc (no seats, 7.6 percent); *PSL* (16 seats, 5.1 percent); Korwin Party and “Together” Party, no seats, 4.8 percent and 3.6 percent of the vote, respectively). Law and Justice is the first party to win an absolute majority in the *Sejm*. Prime Minister is Beata Szydlo, followed by Mateusz Morawiecki. Scandal and Tusk’s absence are factors in the Civic Platform’s defeat.

October 13, 2019 *Sejm* Election. 61.7 percent turnout. Law and Justice (235 seats, 43.6 percent of the vote); Civic Coalition (Civic Platform and Modern Party, 134 seats, 27.4 percent); *SLD* and Left Coalition with *Wiosna* and Together parties (49 seats, 8.6 percent); Polish Coalition (*PSL* and Kukiz Party, 30 seats, 8.6 percent); Korwin Confederation (11 seats, 6.8 percent). Voter support for Law and Justice rises but its share of the seats in the *Sejm* remains the same.